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AGRICULTURAL
CONSERVATION
PROGRAM

GUIDEBOOK
For ASC Farmer
Committeemen



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM SERVICE

PA-350

This Guidebook for Farmer Committeemen gives you community and county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation committeemen an introduction to your job in administering the Agricultural Conservation Program. It offers suggestions on making the ACP more useful to the farmers of your community and county.

In some sections, this *Guidebook* makes a distinction between the duties of county and community committeemen. Where such distinction is not made, it is not made for one of two reasons.

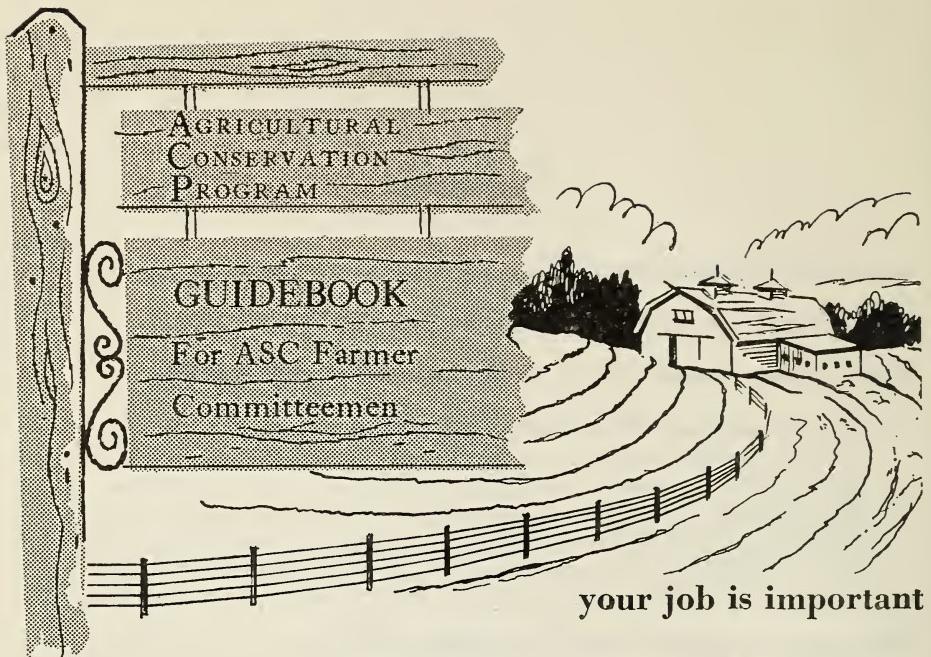
First, many community committeemen will become county committeemen in years to come.

Second, many of the suggestions made for a better ACP are "beyond the call of official duty." The difference between a "good" conservation program and an "excellent" program usually comes from that extra amount of sincere interest, sound thinking and hard work which you put into it. In this, county and community committeemen share equally.

Issued February 1958

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By choosing you to be their Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) committeeman, your neighbors have shown confidence in you to represent them.

It is an important job. Farmers everywhere today are affected by the agricultural conservation, adjustment, and price support programs of the United States Department of Agriculture.

It is important to every farmer, even those who do not take part, that these programs be run right. You will help decide what kind of programs your county will have.

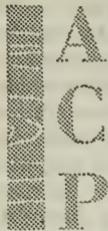
In becoming an ASC county or community committeeman you are joining a group of almost 100,000 farmers and ranchers who now serve in the same way in the more than 3,000 agricultural counties of the United States and territories. And many thousands more have served in past years.

This farmer committee system is unique. Never before have so many farmers, or any other group of citizens, had so direct a voice in running complex government programs. This farmer-government partnership has worked well.

The Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) is one of the programs that you as an ASC committeeman will help run. Through the ACP, all the people share with farmers the cost of needed conservation practices. Your county committee, along with the official representatives of the other agencies in the county that will also participate, will make the final decision on which conservation practices are to be eligible for ACP cost-sharing in your community and county. And you will help make the final decision on the use of your cost-share funds.

You are in a position to make lasting contributions to the soundness of conservation and agriculture in your community and county. Your decisions will help determine how much conservation the ACP cost-sharing program will help farmers and ranchers accomplish.

In all of this, your judgment counts and you have a unique opportunity for conservation leadership.



Agricultural Conservation Holds Key to the Future

We Enjoyed Abundance by Exploiting Our Resources

We in the United States live well. We eat more food, wear better clothes, live in better homes, and have the highest standard of living of this age or of any in the past.

Tremendous natural resources are one of the reasons why this country has enjoyed so much abundance in its short history. Only 350 years ago, our first settlers found many thousands of square miles of forest and prairie upon which an axe or a plow had never been used. And water was plentiful. For thousands or millions of years, nature had built and added to these natural resources.

For the first 300 years of our history, we used those resources recklessly, apparently thinking they would last forever. Little thought was given to conserving soil or water.

Our virgin forests are now largely gone. Most of our 1.1 billion acres of cropland and open grazing land now need conservation to keep them strong and productive.

We're running short of water, too. Our farming, roadbuilding, grazing, and forest-clearing habits let much more of our water run away than when nature was left undisturbed. Our water requirements and use have doubled and tripled several times until they are now 200 billion gallons a day for domestic needs, irrigation, and industrial use. That's an average of 1,200 gallons a day for each one of us. In 25 years, we'll double our requirements and use of water. We must stop the waste of water.

Our population is increasing rapidly. In late 1957 it was 172 million. We

are told to expect a 220 million population by 1975. Department of Agriculture economists estimate that it will require a third more agricultural production to feed, clothe, and house that many people.

We cannot expect to significantly increase our 400 million acres of cropland or our 700 million acres of open grazing land. There may be less farmland, not more, in the future. Bigger yields per acre is the only practical answer.

Conservation, done now, is the key to the greater future production that will be necessary.

Public Aims To Secure Its Future By Sharing Cost of Conservation

It is plain that the agricultural conservation job must be done, for America to meet its future needs. Conservation can be done only by the people who control the land. Farmers are now only about 12 percent of the population. The other 88 percent of the people, living in city, suburb or town, have an equal though different concern in agricultural conservation.

All conservation work costs money. Often the conservation needed in the public interest is more than a farmer can do on his own or will do in his normal farming operation. Conservation farming is more than just good farming.

Over the years, conservation assures a better living to farmers, and through them, to all the people. However, some conservation practices return benefits only after many years. Others do not

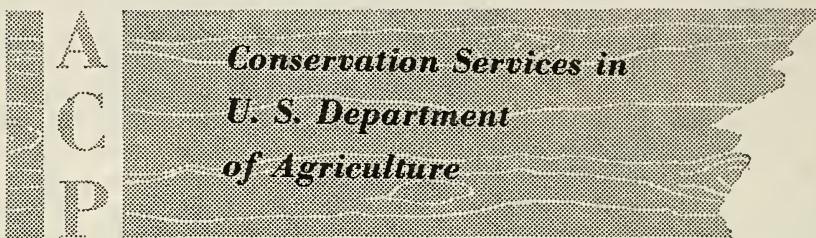
benefit the farmer on whose land the work is done, or do not bring returns sufficient to repay the cost. Often there is a temporary decline in a farmer's income during the time he is establishing a conservation system of farming.

For such reasons as these, farmers may not apply all the conservation needed in the public interest.

The Agricultural Conservation Program helps farmers pay the cost of some of the needed conservation. The

public, through the ACP, pays about half the cost of conservation done under the program, and farmers pay the rest.

Since all the people are making a substantial contribution to conservation through cost-sharing in the public interest, they should know how and why their money is being used. The responsibility of "accounting for this stewardship" belongs to all farmers, but especially it is the responsibility of farmer committeemen.



Department of Agriculture Furnishes Five Types of Conservation Services

The U. S. Department of Agriculture offers many services to help farmers do the job of conservation. To know and understand these services and how they work together, will help you do a better job as a committeeman in bringing conservation services to farmers' attention. These services may be divided into: (1) research; (2) education; (3) technical assistance; (4) credit; and (5) cost-sharing.

All of these services are interrelated. If one of them is needed but not available, the conservation work probably will not be done. No one of these services can accomplish maximum results without the other services also being adequate.

Research. Research to find the best conservation practices is an important part of the Department of Agriculture's total conservation program. The Agricultural Research Service and the State Agricultural Experiment stations are the primary research agencies. The Forest Service also carries on spe-

cific research in connection with its programs.

Education. The Extension Service is traditionally the primary educational agency of the Department of Agriculture. Extension specialists and county agents carry on educational programs in all phases of agriculture, including conservation. As a member of your ASC county committee, the Extension agent is enabled to effectively use ACP facts for a better educational program. Each USDA agency has the responsibility for keeping farmers and the general public informed of its programs.

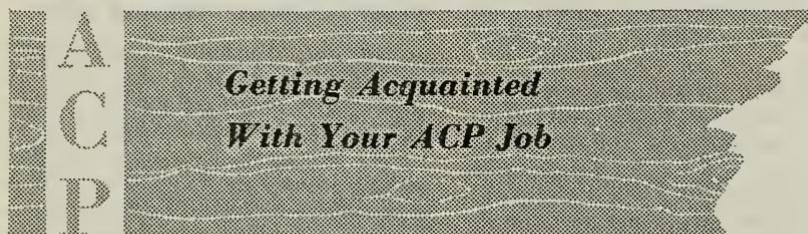
Technical Assistance. The Department's primary conservation technical service agencies are the Soil Conservation Service and the Forest Service. Their local representatives are assigned responsibility for technical services for the ACP practices that require it.

Credit. In addition to those from local banks and other private sources, loans for many soil and water conservation practices may be obtained through the Farmers Home Administration.

The Farm Credit Administration, now an independent agency, works in close cooperation with the Department of Agriculture. The local credit cooperatives operating under Farm Credit Administration supervision—production credit associations and national farm loan associations—provide loans which help farmers carry out conservation programs.

Cost-Sharing. Sharing the cost of establishing conservation practices on

farm and ranch land is primarily carried on through the Agricultural Conservation Program. The Conservation Reserve of the Soil Bank also includes cost-sharing on land put into that program. The Great Plains Conservation Program offers guaranteed long-term cost-sharing under contracts in the Great Plains portion of 10 Western and Midwest States. Other programs with cost-share features may become available.



A NEW COMMITTEEMAN

Farmers' Cost-Sharing Requests Will Be One of Your First Jobs

Newly elected ASC community and county committeemen usually take office during the last 6 months of the year. Election time varies between States, but all elections must be held between July 1 and December 30 each year. Newly elected committeemen assume office on the first of the month following their election.

By the time of your first meeting, the county committee of the year before will probably have already selected the ACP practices and rates for the current year's program. Last year's committee also will have obligated part of the county's funds.

Regardless of the time of the first meeting, one of the first duties of a county committeeman will be to consider for approval additional requests made by farmers for conservation practice cost-sharing.

Your county committee will consider several things in approving or disapproving each request. The amount of funds remaining in the county alloca-

tion will be one of the first considerations. If there is enough money and the request is in keeping with the program principles stated in your ACP State Handbook, and if the practice is needed on the farm and can be carried out so it will increase conservation in the county, the committee likely will approve the request for cost-sharing. Then the farmer must be informed of the action taken.

In making their request for cost-sharing, farmers fill out Form ACP-201, "Request that Federal Government Share Cost of Needed Conservation Practices." These are the requests on which the committee acts.

When your committee approves the request, the farmer is notified on Form ACP-245, "Practices Approved and Application for Payment."

Following completion of the practice, the farmer reports completion and applies for payment on the same Form ACP-245. In the cases where use of technical service is required, such service will be furnished through the technical agency, and its representatives must certify that the practice has been completed satisfactorily.

NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAM

Planning Started Early With County "Development" Meeting

At an appropriate time, the ASC county chairman may call a meeting of all the county and community committeemen to meet with designated persons, to review the local problems and needs, program accomplishments, and objectives, and to obtain recommendations for the next year's national ACP in light of changes believed needed for a better program in the county. This is called the "program development" meeting.

At the same meeting preliminary decisions will need to be reached on needed changes in the county ACP for the next year which can be made under existing authority. If the national program changes, these decisions may be reconsidered.

This meeting, in addition to the ASC county and community committeemen, includes: The county agricultural Extension agent (who is either a member of or secretary to the county committee), the Forest Service representative having jurisdiction of farm forestry in the county with the farm forestry representative of the State, the local Soil Conservation Service representative with the governing body of the local soil conservation district, and the local representative of the Farmers Home Administration.

In addition to these representatives of agencies designated by official regulations, the ASC county committee may and should invite all other agricultural officials and leaders in the county.

All farmers who take part in the ACP, all ASC committeemen, all officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and all citizens want each year's ACP cost-sharing program to achieve the most conservation for the good of the country—a program that gets the most conservation of soil and water resources per dollar spent.

However, agriculture varies greatly between regions, States, counties, and even within counties themselves. It is

not practical to include every good conservation practice in the national program each year. So, the national program authorizes your county committee to propose needed local practices of your own.

This democratic process makes it possible for every farmer and agricultural leader to tell what he wants and give his opinion.

THE NATIONAL PROGRAM

County, State Recommendations Used To Adjust National ACP

Following the county program development meeting, the county "ACP Development Group"—composed of the ASC county committee (including the county Extension agent), the local SCS technician, and the Forest Service representative—makes the final decision on the recommendations to be sent to the ASC State committee for the improvement of the program.

The county ACP Development Group tries to reflect and incorporate the suggestions brought out at the larger meeting. The combination of practical experience and technical judgment is especially valuable for this purpose.

A State program development meeting (similar to that in the county) is held to consider all county recommendations and to develop State recommendations which are sent to the Department of Agriculture in Washington as guides for adjusting the national ACP for next year.

Your county and State recommendations are used to adjust the national Agricultural Conservation Program within authorizations of Congress. The national program as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture is the "ACP National Bulletin."

Your State program is then formed by the State ACP Development Group within the framework of the National Bulletin and published as the "Agricultural Conservation Program State Handbook" for your State.

This process of gathering recommendations from the farmers and other

local people is carried out periodically, usually each year. Although the ACP is a continuing program, this annual adjustment has served well to keep it geared to constantly changing problems and conditions.

STATE ACP HANDBOOK

State Program Is the Guide In Forming Your County ACP

You have probably seen and used your ACP State Handbook before. It will be the guide in taking the final action of setting up your county program. Your committee, with the help of SCS and Forest Service, will have the job of selecting the practices and setting the cost-share rates for your county program for the next year.

You will note that the State Handbook carries a message from the Secretary of Agriculture. He emphasizes the purposes of the ACP as authorized by the Congress and the objectives it is intended to accomplish.

The State Handbook sets forth the provisions and requirements, as approved by the Secretary of Agriculture, under which the program must operate in your State during the coming year. You will want to keep your copy of the State Handbook, to study and refer to for guidance in making decisions throughout the year.

Not enough copies of the State Handbook are available for every farmer. However, each ASC county and community committeeman should have a copy. Your county office has a few copies which may be given to farmers who express an interest in learning more about the details of the ACP.

COUNTY PROGRAM

County ACP Development Group Selects Practices, Sets Rates

Your ACP State Handbook will be in your hands before it is time to take the final action on setting up or formulating your county ACP for the coming year. It will list the practices, with their description, which may be offered

generally to farmers in your State. It will list practice specifications or give references to where they can be found. The State Handbook will show the maximum cost-share rates for your State.

Your county ACP Development Group (ASC county committee and SCS and Forest Service representatives) will form your county program, using the State Handbook as a guide. Forming your county program includes selecting the practices, setting the cost-share rates, and adopting the specifications for the practices.

Your county ACP Development Group will select from the State Handbook the practices which are needed and a substantial number of farmers in your county are ready to use. The rates shown in the State Handbook are the maximum believed needed under ordinary circumstances by any county in your State. Your county ACP Development Group may set lower rates and, under certain circumstances, may obtain approval of rates higher than the maximums in the State program.

The specifications for practices shown in the State Handbook are the minimum standards considered to be necessary in your State to assure the performance of approved practices in a sound manner. Your county ACP Development Group may, if desirable, increase the requirements of practice specifications in your State Handbook.

After your county program is set-up, the committee will make a complete record of it. This record may be in the form of an ACP County Handbook listing, at least, the practices to be used in your county, their rates of cost-sharing, and reference to the general provisions in the State Handbook. It may be desirable to include, in addition, all applicable provisions and practice specifications.

The county office may duplicate part or all of the approved county program for distribution to farmers and others needing information about your county ACP. It is most helpful to a farmer to have, at least, a copy of the particular

practice and specifications which he expects to carry out.

COUNTY ACP FUNDS

Past Use and Present Needs Are Key to County Allocation

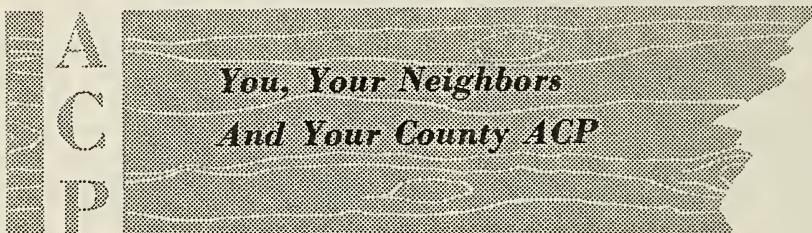
About the time your county committee receives the ACP State Handbook outlining the State program for the coming year, it also receives a notice of funds allocated to your county. This allocation, to be used to provide cost-share conservation assistance to farmers under the coming year's program, is made by your ASC State committee.

Each State receives an allocation of the cost-sharing funds authorized by the Congress. This distribution of pro-

gram funds among the States and territories is made by the Secretary of Agriculture on the basis of conservation needs.

Determining the amount of money to be allocated to each county is one of the most knotty and important problems your ASC State committee must solve. The State committee distributes cost-share funds among counties on the basis of the available information on each county's conservation needs.

Experience has taught State committees a great deal about making allocations to counties. They have found it necessary to sometimes raise or lower county allocations to correct inequities and to keep up with changing conditions.



YOUR DUAL ROLE

Represent Your Farmers to USDA; Represent USDA to Your Farmers

As an ASC committeeman you have two types of responsibility and opportunity. You serve as the representative of your neighbors in these programs. You also serve as the representative of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Your knowledge of your community and your neighbors will enable you to get a good balance in representing both your neighbors and your Government.

When the ACP for the coming year is being developed, your job and opportunity is to do all you can to see that the program is the kind the farmers in your county need to do the best job of enduring conservation.

After the program is ready to use, you have the responsibility for seeing that all your neighbors have the oppor-

tunity to make effective and proper use of it.

In both of these phases you are not only representing your community to the Government, but you are also representing the Government to your community.

Of course, you want the best conservation for your community. But at the same time, as a representative of the Government, you are obligated to see that the program in your community furthers the national interests in conservation.

That is your dual role.

ALL FARMERS ELIGIBLE

Using ACP Does Not Depend On Using Other USDA Programs

All farmers are eligible to use the Agricultural Conservation Program on their farms. There is no distinction between big farmers, little farmers,

owners, tenants or sharecroppers. The requests from all farmers for ACP cost-sharing must receive equal consideration on their merits for conservation.

For some years, ACP has been separated from production adjustment programs. A farmer is not required to take part in any other program of the Department of Agriculture—conservation, production adjustment or other—to be eligible for consideration for ACP cost-sharing.

INFORMING FARMERS

All Farmers Must Know of ACP For It To Be Most Effective

For your county ACP to be effective, all the farmers in the county must know about it. If only a few farmers are familiar with the program and what it offers, only the same few will participate each year. If only a few farmers use the ACP and only the participants are kept informed, the conservation job will fall far short.

There are many ways you can use to be sure that all the farmers in your county know about the ACP, what it is for, and what it can do to assist them in their conservation work.

The county Extension agent is in strategic position to give effective ACP information help because of the educational nature of his work and his position on the ASC county committee. Representatives of the agencies associated in the development and administration of the ACP are in good position to help keep farmers informed because of their many contacts with farmers and their knowledge of the program. Vocational agriculture teachers and others interested in the ACP but not directly associated with it, are also in good position to help inform farmers.

A county committee's efforts to inform farmers should be closely tied to the ACP situation as it develops from week to week. For this reason it is logical that the county office manager be given the responsibility of preparing timely public information on the ACP.

As with all delegation of authority to the office manager, the committee must have a thorough understanding with the manager about the way county ACP information is to be handled.

ACP County Handbook. You are not required to prepare an ACP handbook of your program for distribution. But many counties have found it worthwhile to do so. You may not use ACP funds to print a county handbook, but you may duplicate one in the office.

Many counties run off extra pages of each practice giving rates and specifications. These sheets are given to farmers when they sign up for a practice as an aid in carrying through the practice properly.

Some county programs are printed or sponsored by a local farm or civic group, business organization, or institution.

The Administrative Handbook for ASC County Offices gives regulations on printing and mailing in paragraphs 411 F and 435 A and B.

Community Committeemen. The ASC community committee system is the corner stone of your efforts to inform your neighbors about the ACP. A community committeeman who is well informed about the ACP, its provisions and purposes, is probably the most important source of information about the program for farmers because of his contact with his neighbors.

Community Sign-Up Meetings. Many counties have found that announcing and holding a sign-up period at the time the year's ACP is opened is an effective way to inform farmers. The sign-up itself gives committeemen an estimate of the extent of participation they can expect and serves as a guide for the county information job.

Community sign-up meetings have been more successful when preceded for several weeks by rather extensive publicity. Counties have found that such publicity works best when a careful plan or schedule is worked out well ahead of time by consultation between the ASC county and community com-

mitteemen, the county agent, SCS, FS, and FHA representatives, SCD supervisors, and other interested groups.

Farmer Meetings. In addition to ACP sign-up meetings, counties have found that meetings on other topics conducted for farm people by the ASC and other cooperating agencies, groups and organizations, are excellent opportunities for keeping farmers informed. The Extension county agricultural agent and county home demonstration agent are always ready to spread information about the ACP because more conservation means better farming and thus, better living.

Soil conservation districts and rural organizations such as 4-H clubs, Future Farmers, Farm Bureau, Grange, Farmers Union, crop improvement associations, dairy herd improvement associations, livestock associations, poultry organizations, credit associations, community improvement clubs, and many others are interested in conservation. They can be of great assistance in announcing and explaining ACP facts. It will pay to keep their officers interested and informed.

Newspapers. Many counties use local newspapers to "pin point" information to farmers in a county or in a particular part of a county. They use newspaper stories to announce the local program, its practices, rates of cost-sharing, and report ACP progress, on which farmers must be informed.

Radio Stations. Local radio stations serving the county have been helpful in keeping farmers informed about the ACP. Radio's chief advantage is its speed. Radio has no worries about publication or distribution delays. Information can be put on the air soon after it is received and reaches the listener instantly.

Many counties make good use of radio other than on regular programs

of their own. One way is to appear as a guest for interview on established programs. Another is to furnish information to the farm director or newscaster, much as for newspapers.

Press and Radio as Team. A great many farmer committees successfully keep farmers in touch with the ACP by sending material to both radio stations and newspapers. They have found radio and press most effective in informing farmers when both are used as a team rather than relying entirely upon one or the other.

Letters and Cards. Letters and postal cards produced in quantity by mimeograph or ditto processes are important means of keeping farmers informed on the ACP. If mass direct mailings are to be used, keeping accurate mailing lists is very important.

Where Farmers Trade. Many counties keep businessmen and dealers in the county where farmers trade, informed about the ACP. Keeping these people up-to-date by inviting them to attend meetings, giving them handbooks, and sending them ACP information, is helpful in relaying facts to farmers.

General Mailings and Contacts. Many committees use day-to-day contacts with farmers and mailings to farmers in connection with other programs as opportunities to keep farmers informed on ACP facts.

Posters, Exhibits and Displays. Some counties have made effective use of wall or window posters, both large and small exhibits or other types of displays as means to inform farmers and the public of the assistance for conservation work that is offered in the county ACP. A practice or program summary carried on a poster in the county ASC office serves as a reference for the staff as well as being useful to explain the program to callers in the office.

Do your neighbors know these ACP facts?

The ACP Is

An Incentive Program to get more conservation on individual farms needed in the public interest than would be possible if farmers were to depend entirely on their own resources.

A Cost-Sharing Program in which farmers as participants, pay a substantial part of the cost of the practices in money, their labor, use of their own farm machinery, or in materials.

A Democratic Program in which most of the planning and operation is in the hands of farmers. There are almost 82,000 community committeemen and over 9,000 county committeemen. All are farmers and elected by their neighbors.

A Means of Establishing new practices and of helping farmers get started in conservation farming.

A Teamwork Operation between agencies of the Department of Agriculture, State and local government, and other citizens.

The ACP Is NOT

A Subsidy, Hand-Out, rural relief or income supplement program; and does not make big payments to farmers.

A Production Adjustment program. Land in ACP need not be taken out of production. However, ACP can and does supplement production adjustment by helping farmers increase conservation on acres taken out of production.

A Farm Plan, but it can and does help farmers to carry out their farm conservation plans for protection and improvement of soil and water resources.

Intended to "Stand Alone." Rather, it serves as one of the facilities to help farmers and other conservation agencies to accomplish their conservation goals.

A Program for Simply Getting practices established. Rather, it is a necessary means for helping farmers to establish systems of conservation farming that put into effect better soil and water management and use.



Flexibility of ACP Helps Committees Meet Local Needs

ACP IS ADJUSTABLE

Can Help Farmers Solve Most Local Agricultural Conservation Problems

The national Agricultural Conservation Program is not a cut and dried affair. It is flexible so that, within the national program and legislative authorization, your committee will be able to offer cost-sharing assistance in solving most of your local conservation problems.

The national program lays down broad requirements and principles. Counties have so much flexibility within the national provisions that the local programs vary considerably from county to county.

If you were to visit a county in another part of the country, or perhaps even in your own State, you might find the other county's program quite different from your own. However, you'd find their program, like your program, to be "consistent with good conservation principles" for the local agriculture and conditions.

It is your duty to your farmers to make use of ACP's flexible features to build your county program in the way you think it should be, to help meet your county conservation problems as they exist.

SPECIAL LOCAL PRACTICES

County Committee May Get Approval For Special Practices

You as an ASC committeeman have ample authority and are urged to take leadership in developing additional practices where necessary to expand the national and State ACP in line with your special county needs.

The provision in the ACP National Bulletin and your ACP State Handbook for three types of practices "To Meet Special County Conservation Needs" provides each county with flexibility to meet its local problems in a manner consistent with national ACP principles, policies, and legislative requirements.

Your State Handbook tells how to use these three types of local practice authority:

Special Conservation Practices. This provision makes it possible for a county ACP Development Group to use any needed practice listed in the ACP National Bulletin but not included in the ACP State Handbook.

County Conservation Practices. This provision makes it possible to obtain approval for conservation practices which, in the judgment of the county ACP Development Group, are needed in the county even though not included in the State Handbook or the National Bulletin.

Examples of more widely used county conservation practices in a recent year are:

- Constructing stock trails through natural barriers to promote proper range utilization.
- Constructing firebreaks or fireguards to protect grazing or forest land.
- Subsoiling to improve water penetration and retard runoff to control erosion.

Practices To Meet New Conservation Problems. This provision allows the program to assist farmers to "roll with the punch" after an emergency, which comes after the program year is already started. Damage to farmland resulting from an emergency

such as a flood or a hurricane may overnight become the biggest conservation problem in a county. Such a situation could not be anticipated when the county ACP was formed.

Examples of such practices used on farmland in the past are:

- Emergency listing or pitting of land to stop or decrease severe wind erosion in periods of extreme drought.

- Removal of rubble, rubbish, stones, gravel or sand deposited on farmland by floods.

- Repair or replacement of dams, dikes, levees, diversions, waterways, drainage systems, damaged by floods.

COST-SHARE RATES

State Rates Are Maximum; Counties May Use Lower Rates

A maximum rate for Federal cost-sharing for each practice is carried in your ACP State Handbook. These rates may become the rates of cost-sharing your county committee will use in your program. However, your county ACP Group is authorized to lower any of these rates in your county to stretch the program money if the committee thinks it desirable, or to afford more funds for emphasizing other new or badly needed practices. Under certain circumstances, your county ACP Development Group may obtain approval of rates higher than the maximum rates in your State Handbook.

SHIFTING FUNDS

Unused County Cost-Share Funds May Be Shifted to Another County

If your county committee has used up the funds allocated to it by your State committee for any one ACP program year, it is possible that the State committee may allot you additional money if other counties in your State are not using all their funds.

If the State committee finds that your county will not use all of its cost-share

money, the State committee has the authority to transfer it to other counties in the State where additional cost-share funds are needed.

This should suggest two things to you as an ASC committeeman: (1) Make plans to get additional conservation using all the funds allocated to you; and (2) keep posted through your farmer fieldmen as to whether some other counties in your State may have unused money or can use money you will not need.

CONCURRENT OPERATIONS

Using Funds of Two Programs During Last Months of Year

County committees have found very definite advantages in using what is known as the "concurrent operations" method of running a county ACP.

Under this method the county committee operates two programs (the current year's and next year's) at the same time during the last months of the calendar year.

It gets more flexibility into your ACP. It helps you to make full use of the cost-share funds available to your county, to get more conservation done, and to keep the program going continuously.

During the time you are operating two programs concurrently, the rates and specifications must be the same for practices that are in both programs.

This example illustrates how it works. Suppose your county has \$50,000 for cost-sharing under this year's program. You approve requests totaling \$50,000 during the first eight months. The new program for the next year becomes available July 1, also carrying an allocation of \$50,000.

In the fall, you find out that \$5,000 of the practices you approved under the current year will not be completed—\$5,000 will be unused. This happens when farmers are unable to carry out during the year as many things as they had planned to do earlier.

What to do with the unearned \$5,000? You may use it, if the State committee authorizes you to do so, to pay for cost-sharing assistance for practices requested under the new program that are completed by December 31 by shifting these new year approvals back to the current program.

On the other hand, suppose your county committee was authorized by the State committee to issue approvals for \$3,000 more than your firm allocation. You were authorized to do this anticipating that the actual performance would not use more than \$50,000. But almost every farmer completed his practices under the current program. And you find yourself owing the farmers of the county \$53,000 with only \$50,000 to pay it. \$3,000 in cost-shares earned under the current program during the period of concurrent operation may be transferred to next year's program, if authorized by the State committee.

POOLING AGREEMENTS

Help Farmers Tackle Community Jobs They Can't Handle Alone

Most ACP cost-sharing practices are carried out by individual farmers on their separate farms. However, some conservation problems affect more than one farm and cannot be solved by farmers working individually on separate farms. The national program contains a provision to meet such problems.

To permit farmers to work together on such projects and receive cost-sharing to help pay for them, "pooling agreements" may be approved by county committees under certain conditions and situations. One important requirement is that land in all the farms in the "pool" get some benefit from the project.

While pooling agreements are not confined to water collection, storage or disposal, most of them are for this purpose.

On ordinary ACP practices, cost-share assistance is limited to a certain amount per farmer a year. However, under pooling agreements, the limit each participant may receive is higher. These limits are shown each year in the ACP State Handbook and the ACP National Bulletin.

Since large sums of money, representing a sizable part of the county's ACP fund, may be involved, the county committee will want to give careful study before approving a pooling agreement. Usually you will want to seek the advice and counsel of the farmer fieldman and also of the ASC State committee.

PURCHASE ORDERS

ACP Purchase Orders for Materials And Services Speed Conservation

Most ASC county committees use the purchase order plan to help a farmer secure conservation materials and services more easily from dealers and contractors (vendors). This system is called "Conservation Materials and Services" (CMS). This plan allows a farmer to secure what he needs to complete an approved conservation practice without having to put up all the cash himself in advance. As an advance to the farmer, the Government will pay the vendor for conservation materials and services up to the amount of the cost-share approved.

Purchase orders are commonly used to buy seed, lime, fertilizer and trees; or to pay contractors for earth-moving or concrete work and timber stand improvement.

A maximum use of purchase orders for furnishing conservation materials and services (CMS) to farmers is an excellent way to support a good county ACP. CMS speeds up conservation. CMS enables many farmers to perform practices that they could not otherwise perform because of lack of ready cash.



Making Your ACP Work Better

A STRONG COUNTY ACP

Here Are Ways County Committees Have Made Their Program Stronger

Every ASC State committee can point to counties where "there is a strong county ACP." They probably can also point out some counties where the ACP is weak.

Of course, as a committeeman you are determined that the program in your county is going to be "a strong one." There are many characteristics that make a county ACP strong.

A strong county program helps farmers establish a conservation system of farming that is best for the farmers, their county, and the Nation. Characteristics of a strong program are:

Promotes Lasting Conservation. Practices are chosen and rates are set to encourage farmers to use practices with the most enduring conservation benefits. The county committee always has its eyes on the future.

Helps Farmers Do More. Cost-sharing is offered for practices which farmers in the county could not carry out themselves with their own resources to get the amount and the kind of conservation that their county needs.

Introduces New Conservation Practices. The county committee uses the cost-share money to introduce new and needed conservation practices that are not yet part of the regular good farming practices followed in that county. It does not continue to share cost on practices after they are so well established that farmers could continue to carry them out adequately without cost-sharing.

Revises Rates as Needed. The county committee watches closely the

rates of cost-sharing and the conservation farming being done. It sets rates no higher than is necessary to get the needed conservation. If just as much conservation would be done with a lower rate, they lower the rate. Then the money saved will help get other conservation work done.

Keeps Farmers Informed. The county committee keeps farmers informed on conservation problems and objectives and on conservation opportunities offered by the ACP.

Helps Carry Out Other Programs. The committee uses ACP to help farmers carry out farm and ranch conservation work planned by other agencies, institutions and organizations.

For example, ACP often enables farmers to accomplish conservation work they have planned with the help of SCS technicians on farms in soil conservation districts. Also it is used to help farmers pay for practices needed and recommended on farms in watershed projects and in planting trees on reforestation projects. It also helps to carry out needed conservation work on farmland where farmers are cooperating in projects of the Extension Service, Vocational Agriculture, or other organizations. ACP practices have been used as guides for other conservation programs.

These are among the characteristics of a strong county ACP.

AVOID EXTREMES

Spreading "Too Thick" or "Too Thin" Makes Poor ACP

As an ASC committeeman you want to get the maximum amount of conser-

vation done in your county with the ACP funds you have.

If you were to examine the ACP operation over several years in a county which does not seem to be getting its money's worth, you would probably find that its committee has not steered a middle course, but has gone to extremes.

Some of the extremes are: Too many practices, or not enough practices, in the country program. Trying to reach too many farmers in one year, or not reaching enough. Having cost-share funds left over, or running out of money early in the program year. Approving more requests than can be handled, or holding back and not approving enough requests.

Some committees in the past have drifted into these extremes innocently, with all the good intentions in the world.

Too Thin. It's a temptation to try to please all the farmers by spreading your funds out so thin that they don't do a good job for anyone.

To give at least a little cost-sharing assistance to each of a great many farmers, some committees have reduced cost-share rates too far. Some have set too low limits on the amount of cost-share assistance any one farmer may receive.

When funds are spread out thin, the program will reach a lot of farmers, but it may not get much conservation done for any of them. Good conservation costs money. Farmers who need cost-sharing must have enough money to do the job.

Too Thick. On the other hand, some committees have gone to the opposite extreme. They have concentrated too much assistance on too few farms. This did an excellent job for those farmers who were fortunate enough to get into the program. But there were a great many more not served because all the money was spent on only a few farms.

Getting Good Balance. County committees have found that studying the pattern of ACP participation in

their counties is a good way to find out whether the program is too thick or too thin.

Such a survey shows you the farmers who are in the program every year, the farmers who are in one year and out the next, and the farmers who use ACP seldom or never. The next step in such a survey is to find out why some farmers seldom or never take part in ACP. Community committeemen can perform valuable service in carrying out and interpreting such surveys of participation.

Too Many or Too Few Practices. A county program can get off to a wrong start if the committee puts too many practices in, or does not offer enough practices.

It usually is not necessary to include all the practices offered in your ACP State Handbook. It generally is not worthwhile to include a practice simply because you expect one or two farmers might want to use it. It is not necessary to continue a practice in the program just because it is popular. Once well established in the county's system of good farming, its use in the program should be limited.

The other extreme is concentrating on only a few practices. This limits the service to only those farmers who can use those few practices. It prevents the program from being well balanced.

In selecting practices, a county committee should consider carefully the conservation needs of the county, and talk over each practice to see if it is needed, if cost-sharing is needed for it, and if the practice will be used by a substantial number of farmers.

Committeemen have the responsibility to balance their program each year to get at the major conservation problems in the county. The emphasis will probably be changed from one year to the next. As one conservation problem is solved, the program can go on to the next.

Not Enough or Too Much Money. A poor job of estimating par-

ticipation and accomplishment at the beginning of the program year usually will result in the county ACP running out of cost-share funds long before the year is over, or else having on hand more money than can be used.

One way to help avoid these difficulties is to get farmers to sign up as early in the year as is practical and then urge them to complete their practices well before the end of the year.

With an early sign-up, the committee will have a better idea of what to expect as the year goes on and will be able to budget its funds to best advantage.

Most county committees have found that it helps to set reasonably early deadlines for practices to be completed. They remind each farmer at the time of sign-up to file notice of completion promptly. They remind each farmer specifically before his cost-share approval expires, so that he can make his report, or if he needs more time, he can ask for an extension. Such steps help the committee to keep a more accurate check of their cost-share funds.

Information going to farmers in various ways during the year helps bring them into the office to make their requests and report completion. If additional funds are received for any reason, this information should be gotten to the farmers quickly.

COUNTY OFFICE STAFF

Good Day-by-Day Operation Improves Service to Farmers

An efficient and friendly county office staff is a great asset for a strong county ACP. A strong program, well understood by the county staff, makes it easier for them to help you carry out your ACP responsibilities to the farmers in your county.

The county office manager is in charge of the day-by-day operations of the ACP for the committee. The way that he and his staff handle the details of ACP operation delegated to them by the county committee is im-

portant in making the program work best.

Examples of the type of ACP business which the county committee would **not** delegate to others, are:

- All county program development and program formulation operations, including setting cost-share rates.
- Budgeting ACP funds to keep approvals for cost-sharing within the limits of funds.
- Approval of pooling agreements.
- Recommending or approving fair prices for materials and services.
- Approval or rejection of requests for cost-sharing, except under clearly defined, written policies of the committee.
- Determining and recommending to the State committee the amount of county ACP funds to be transferred for technical services on ACP practices.
- Hearings and decisions on appeals and violations.

Most other ACP activities may be performed by the county office manager and his staff under the direction of your county committee.

When a new committee or a new manager takes office, a careful review will help avoid later misunderstandings and difficulties. Both your committee and your manager should clearly understand the delegation of authority the county committee makes on ACP matters.

Delegation of authority to a county office manager to perform some of the functions of the county committee is subject to the approval of the ASC State committee. When such delegation is made, the county office manager is required to act in accordance with standards set forth by the county committee in the official minutes of committee meetings.

FARMER FIELDMEN

Farmer Fieldmen Are Agents Of the ASC State Committee

Your ASC State committee is responsible for operating the ACP in

your State. It must account to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for the use of ACP funds.

To assist ASC county committees operate county programs, the State committee staff includes "farmer fieldmen" who visit county offices regularly. Fieldmen are experienced in farmer-committee-operated programs. They

are in constant touch with the State Office and the counties in their district.

While the job of making the decisions of running your county ACP belongs in the hands of the committee and cannot be side-stepped, the advice and guidance of the farmer fieldman will help you to have a better county program.



Other Provisions To Reinforce Your Program

TECHNICAL SERVICES

The ACP makes provision for technical service for those program practices which require it and which farmers cannot ordinarily supply themselves. The practices are designated in your State Handbook. This provision insures technical soundness of practices on which cost-sharing is furnished. Needed technical services are generally provided through SCS and Forest Service.

Some of these technical services are available through the regular work programs of these agencies. If additional technical services, over and above those furnished through these regular programs, are needed, county committees are authorized to recommend transfers of ACP cost-share funds to these agencies or other public agencies to pay for such needed services.

MAKING REQUESTS FIRST

A request for cost-sharing under ACP must be made before work on the practice is started. The only exception is for certain emergency practices when so provided by the National Bulletin.

Frequently you will be asked by farmers why they cannot receive cost-

sharing for a practice that was started before the request was made.

Your county has a limited amount of cost-sharing funds. You cannot approve all requests in every year. Unless a prior request is filed, your committee will have no idea of the total amount of cost-shares it will be asked to pay.

Also, your funds are for use in getting "additional" conservation. There always is a serious doubt that cost-sharing was needed for conservation work carried out before the farmer requests assistance.

LIMITS ON COST-SHARES

The maximums in ACP cost-sharing any one person may receive under the program of any one year is shown in the ACP National Bulletin of that year. State or county committees may set lower cost-share limits if they wish. State cost-share limits are announced each year in your ACP State Handbook. The National Bulletin does not limit the number of practices for which a farmer may receive cost-sharing.

The Congress of the United States has provided that all cost-shares of less than \$200 shall be increased. Cost-shares from \$186.00 to \$199.99 are increased to \$200. Those from \$60 to \$185.99 are increased \$14. Those

less than \$60 are increased by smaller amounts, according to the table published in your ACP State Handbook.

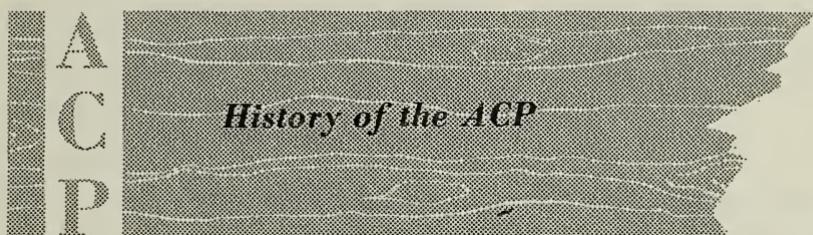
WILDLIFE AND ACP

The Agricultural Conservation Program does not share costs for any practice that has benefits to wildlife as its primary purpose. The primary purpose of any ACP practice by law must be soil and water conservation.

However, you are encouraged to consider benefits to wildlife when your ACP Development Group makes decisions regarding practices and plant-

ing materials. For example, the national practice on Tree Planting, states: "If shrubs are used, those that benefit wildlife should be given preference wherever possible." Practices carried out under the ACP for soil and water conservation have many benefits to wildlife as a by-product by providing water, cover and feed.

Using ACP cost-share funds to build ponds primarily for fish or for recreational purposes cannot be approved. However, many ponds built for conservation and storage of water for agricultural purposes are also good places for fish.



The Agricultural Conservation Program was established by the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of February 29, 1936.

This Act authorized Agricultural Conservation Program payments to farmers for shifting acreage from soil-depleting to soil-building crops, and for conservation plantings and practices.

The 1944 ACP was the first for which payments were made only for specific soil building and soil and water conserving measures. Previously, ACP had offered payments for both production and land use adjustments and conservation measures.

During the next few years, the ACP emerged as we know it today. During World War II, the ACP assisted farmers through cost-sharing to carry out conservation consistent with their efforts in increasing food production. ACP emphasized practices which improved and protected the soil, prevented wind and water erosion, made

better use of agricultural water, and increased range and pasture forage.

The local committees which administer the ACP and other programs were first known as Agricultural Adjustment Administration (Triple-A) committees. The names were changed several times following that beginning. The Agricultural Conservation Association (ACA) committees were established in 1936, but became known as AAA committees again in 1938. Then from 1946 to 1953, they were called Production and Marketing Administration (PMA) committees. In 1953, the farmer committees became known as Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) committees.

In early 1953, the Agricultural Conservation Program Service (ACPS) was established as a separate agency in the Department of Agriculture with national responsibility for administering the conservation cost-sharing program. In late 1953, the Commodity Stabilization Service (CSS) was es-

tablished to administer national price support and acreage adjustment programs of the Department.

There is no national ASC agency. The ASC committees are responsible for local and State administration of programs assigned to the CSS and the ACPS.

Although the name of the committees administering the ACP and other programs has been changed several times, the name of the Agricultural

Conservation Program (ACP) has remained unchanged since early 1936.

Through the years, the farmer committees have worked hard and well to enable the Agricultural Conservation Program to serve effectively the nation and its agriculture. You as a committeeman have a great responsibility and opportunity as you help make the decisions that determine the conservation accomplishments under the ACP in the future.



Program Accomplishments in 21 Years, 1936-1956

Terraces to control water and check erosion-----	22.2 million acres
Spreader and diversion terraces-----	567 million linear feet
Contour farming-----	143 million acres
Field stripcropping-----	103.4 million acres
Permanent sod waterways and terrace outlets-----	21.8 billion square feet
Annual green manure and cover crops-----	395 million acres
Permanent type cover for all purposes-----	82 million acres
Seeding or improving cover in rotation-----	248 million acres
Stubble mulching-----	63.6 million acres
Storage type dams for erosion control, water conservation, and better distribution of grazing.	1.4 million
Drainage for conservation-----	34.2 million acres
Leveling irrigable land to conserve irrigation water and control erosion.	5.8 million acres
Natural reseeding of range land by deferred grazing.	198 million acres
Springs and new wells for livestock permitting better grassland management.	198.7 thousand
Pipelines for livestock water-----	29 million linear feet
Controlling competitive plants in pastures and range.	35.6 million acres
Tree planting-----	1.7 million acres
Timber stand improvement-----	1.1 million acres
Mulching orchards, vineyards, cropland-----	3.8 million tons
Subsoiling to improve moisture penetration-----	12 million acres
Emergency tillage on cropland to control erosion.	128 million acres
Deep plowing on sandy cropland to control wind erosion.	2.3 million acres
Contour operations on noncrop pastures-----	3.2 million acres
Lime to permit establishing cover-----	359 million tons

